**WAC Committee meeting R 10/24/13**

**Present:** Rachel Luria, Dan Murtaugh, Joe Su, Julianne Curran, Jeff Galin, Fred Bloestscher  
**Absent:** Allen Smith, Julia Mason, Ellen Ryan

**1. Writing Enriched Curriculum**

**Follow up discussion of Univ. of Minnesota WEC Director Pamela Flash**

**JG** asked for impressions of Prof. Flash’s WEC presentation. **FB** reiterated the key question of attaining a critical mass of support for initiative. **JG** explained UMN’s grant that enabled some financial incentive for involvement. He also added that FAU WAC/WEC investigators have been invited by other institutions developing similar ‘home-grown’ programs to collaborate on a panel at the International Writing Across Curriculum (IWAC) conference investigating how a university goes about creating a substantial program and to consider whether it is possible without a grant. One aspect that FAU would want to revise from UMN’s program is the assessment portion.

**Cost?** At UMN the estimated start-up cost was 100K with added funds each year; some of the initial cost is directed toward hiring. **JS** commented that this amount is small relative to other program startups, but **JG** added that many divisions are under-funded and that any support will require a very convincing proposal and a clear, specific budget. It is unlikely that FAU will commit to such an amount, which is a factor in why we will proceed slowly.

**How to get support? JG** feels that like the way the WAC program was developed, we should focus on establishing the support from the faculty and/or UUPC for the WEC initiative before approaching administration about funding. Also, it would be preferable not to have the infrastructure of a grant to allow more flexibility.

**FB** and **DM** agreed that the place to begin is by raising the issue of observations that faculty have made about transfer students having weak writing skills since they do not take writing courses at FAU.

**FB** suggests that the best tactic for talking to the faculty is to approach both chairs and faculty members. Speak to faculty first, collect data from short faculty survey and student demographics, then approach chairs. **JG’s** concern is that full disclosure of WEC may be too daunting; however, **FB** suggested outlining the goals rather than the full process.

The benefit is that if chair is interested, it is way to map the department’s curriculum.

**JS** proposed approaching the issue from the state’s perspective of the ultimate goal being employment. WAC could draft a document summarizing how important writing is to getting a job. With this document, approach the upper administration. This tactic might be simpler because the survey data might become complicated, especially if it is qualitative. **FB** agreed that that it will be important to identify that writing skills can limit or increase employment opportunities, and we could use this angle as a way to rally for more money from the state. It may also be advantageous to partner with the QEP since presumably more writing will occur in the research produced.

**JG** will draft such a document now, although Administration response is uncertain. Likely Admin’s concern would be the WEC initiative competing with the QEP. If we waited until spring, we could generate more documents and delineated procedures to present to the Provost.

**Data? JS** suggested starting conversations about WEC by identifying data on student writing skills at FAU to help make a distinction between faculty perceptions and student reality. **JG** suggested it may be worthwhile to revisit university-wide faculty survey about perceptions of student writing. **FB** suggested looking at GRE scores of students who attended FAU for all four years versus students who transferred to FAU, eliminating factors like international students. In theory, students’ entering SAT score and exiting GRE scores should be at least the same. **JS** suggested using a student survey to gather a body of data on student perspective. **Thinks Donna Chamely Wiik may have a copy of survey from a recent conference.**

**FB believes that WAC can improve WEC’s standing if we can show the following four items:**  
 - faculty support  
 - department chair support  
 - data of exiting GRE scores as compared to entering SAT scores (in theory they should be at least the same)  
 - a link between graduate performance and state incentive for jobs

**JG will meet with Donna Chamely-Wiik about collaborating with QEP and ask Dean Pratt about recommendations for approaching upper administration. By next meeting JG and JC will draft a document summarizing the link(s) between writing skills & transfer versus native students and writing skills & employment.**

**2. Update on Faculty Learning Community for WEC**

The FLC meets biweekly to consider implications of WEC. Dynamic Criteria Mapping process is being reviewed as an approach to identify precise writing evaluation criteria. By the end of the fall term we hope to develop policy language. In spring, we hope to show this language to departments, perhaps speaking about it to chairs this semester.

**3. WAC and support of Teaching Assistants: History replacement 1102 and WAC TA support guidelines**

**The WAC Criteria for an 1102 replacement state that:**

All courses that substitute for College Writing II will be taught by full-time faculty. Syllabi for new College Writing II-substitute courses must be submitted to the WAC Committee at least three months prior to the expected date of course implementation.  The WAC committee will review and forward approved syllabi to the English Department's Writing Committee and will notify the author of approval, denial, or recommendations for revision.

All Teaching Assistants who will take primary responsibility for a College Writing I or II course and who do not have at least eighteen hours of credit in the discipline in which the course is taught must take a teaching seminar before or during their first term teaching, attend supervised colloquia in subsequent semesters until they have earned the eighteen credits, and be mentored by designated tenure-line Instructors.

**JG** does not remember WAC’s rationale for stipulating that only tenured faculty can teach a replacement 1102. **DM** suggested it was likely because such courses are invented for specific purposes, which are beyond the capabilities and responsibilities of graduate students.

The History Department wants to develop its own replacement 1102 and would like TAs to be able to teach it. Currently, History teaches a semester seminar for graduate students on teaching and professionalization in the discipline; it does not have a colloquium.

**JG asked the committee if they had any concerns with history allowing TAs to teach such a course, as it is likely that the department would submit a written request for an exception to be able to do so.** **The committee members present agreed that a History replacement 1102 taught be TAs would be acceptable provided that it is supported and supervised.**

**DM** thinks that concern is lessened if it is conceived as a single course with multiple realizations designed by faculty, not TAs, and that there is regular supervision of the GTAs. WAC could potentially request that only experienced GTAs teach it or that assignments would be based on experience; **JG** supported. **DM** advised WAC be careful in how it structures its model for History, as **JG** suggested it may serve as a future model for other departments.

**The committee followed up on a Spring 2012 conversation about support criteria for TAs of WAC courses. The rationale for this previous conversation was to establish a university policy** for a minimum of standards for training/support that departments would need to provide TAs teaching WAC courses.

Looking at the criteria that the committee drafted in Spring 2012, **JG** asked the committee if they are satisfied with the minimum TA criteria or if it felt that there should be more extensive training than what these minimum guidelines stipulate? Are a few 2-3 hour workshops, occasional meetings with mentors, and the WAC training sufficient for TA support in WAC classes? The goal is not to interfere with departments, but to rally for more resources for TAs who are under-supported and under-trained.

**The committee members present did not have objections to allowing for these guidelines to remain as the minimum standards; there was no discussion as to whether to advance the criteria to faculty governing bodies. If there are no objections to these minimum support standards, then JG will continue to work with individual departments whose TAs might be under-supported to help them develop stronger means of TA support.**

**4. College of Arts and Letters and a “Writing Enhanced” curriculum proposal**

In an effort to protect class caps in A&L, the college is proposing that certain non-WAC courses be designated as “writing-enhanced.” At this time, **JG** is unsure about the nature of criteria for such courses, but is hesitant to have such a designation associated with WAC as it might be confusing. There is also concern that this A&L designation might conflict with the WEC initiative. As presented at this time, the A&L designation would be based on whether courses in their existing form would meet a set of reduced WAC criteria; there would be no curricular or pedagogical change, as WEC would hope to instigate. Also, this would be a local designation within the college; there would be no official university-wide connection, which would eventually need to happen if the Writing Enriched Curriculum initiative gets supported. Concern raised by **DM** observed that designating courses for the primary purpose of preserving caps would lack a departmental rationale as to identifying which courses are set up to reach certain goals and agreed that this move in the college may compromise the WAC committee’s goal with WEC. **JG** suggested that potentially A&L courses designated in this way might later translate into WEC, but the concept of WEC looks at an entire program, not a selection of courses. It may also lessen motivation to participate in curricular changes that WEC would require if the need to protect class size is already fulfilled. **DM** reiterated the idea that courses have writing not because it keeps course caps down, but because it is something that is important. Higher caps would mean cutting back on something valued. **RL** suggested using this as an opportunity to approach faculty and suggest our WEC as a way to partner with colleges and show how WEC might help work toward smaller classes and protect writing.

**JG will report back to the English Department chair that the WAC committee has concerns about this possible “writing-enhanced” designation, but feels that there could be potential for collaboration in the long run. Primarily, the committee would prefer that the “Writing Enhanced Courses” name not be used as it is too similar to Writing Enriched Curriculum. Also the college should understand that possible conflicts exist and how such a designation would potentially have to be university wide. Furthermore, if the Writing Enriched initiative gets supported, this new designation would have to be folded into it in some way. JG will report back to the committee with future developments.**

**5. WAC Committee Representation and Soliciting new members**

Over the past few years the WAC committee has not increased in size and has lost representation from other departments besides English. We would like to send out a call for participation to tenure-line faculty who would be interested in serving on the committee. We can send the call widely, but perhaps target certain populations that have a large number of WAC courses.