

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: THE SENATE INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATIONS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
FROM: THE SIFOC WRITING OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE (AUTHOR - MICHELE NINACS, DIRECTOR, COLLEGE WRITING PROGRAM)
SUBJECT: CWP SYLLABI ASSESSMENT AND WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM
DATE: 6/2/2011

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME EVALUATION

The College Writing Program and Writing Oversight Committee reviewed the Student Learning Outcomes for CWP 101 and CWP 102 and determined that those learning outcomes were consistent with the SLO's of IF, SUNY-GER, and standards within the field of Composition. There are no recommendations for amending the CWP 101/102 Student Learning Outcomes at this time.

2011 ASSESSMENT OF FACULTY SYLLABI FOR CWP 101 AND 102.

The College Writing Program conducted an in-depth review of all faculty syllabi for CWP 101 and CWP 102 during the spring 2011 semester. CWP faculty were first notified of the upcoming syllabi assessment during the spring 2010 semester. Syllabi requirements and format were reviewed again at the first CWP faculty meeting held just prior to the start of the fall 2010 semester. At the start of the spring 2011 term, all faculty were required to submit to the CWP committee a syllabus for each course they were teaching during that term. The CWP committee, comprised of Michele Ninacs, Irene Sipos, Janice Carello, John McKinnis, and Wendy Scott, created a checklist identifying 22 components and 9 characteristics that should comprise all CWP syllabi. Syllabi were reviewed using this checklist, with the results as followed (% rounded up):

Major findings:

- **82% out of 46 CWP syllabi sampled demonstrated the required components and desired characteristics.**

Assessment criteria and data:

A. REQUIRED COMPONENTS:	% YES	% NO
1. Course Name	100	0
2. CRN	82	18
3. Term and year	98	2
4. Instructor name	100	0
5. Office location	100	0
6. Phone number	87	13
7. Email	98	2
8. Office hours	100	0
9. Catalog Course description	95	5
10. CWP/If Objectives	75	25
11. Prerequisites	85	15
12. Policy on "C" or higher	93	7
13. Required texts	100	0
14. Course process and materials	80	20
15. Attendance policy	82	18
16. Grading policy	76	24
17. Tutoring policy	96	4
18. Plagiarism policy or link	100	0

19. Disabilities statement or link	96	4
20. Behavior policy or link	91	9
21. CWP Placement guidelines or link	75	25
22. IF information or link	78	22

B. <u>DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS:</u>	<u>%Yes</u>	<u>%No</u>
1. Clearly articulated grading policy	58	42
2. High performance standards	89	11
3. SLO - writing Process	75	25
4. SLO – common college-level forms	82	18
5. SLO – use of research	85	15
6. Peer collaboration	60	40
7. Identification of error patterns	4	96
8. Atmosphere of respect for diverse viewpoints	40	60
9. Common pedagogical practices	69	31
<u>Average:</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>No</u>
	82%	18%

AREAS OF CONCERN:

- A. Required components: 100% compliance is the obvious goal. There may be mitigating factors impacting faculty compliance. Because of resource issues, some faculty do not have dedicated phone lines, answering machines, or appropriate office space in which to meet and conference with students. These factors may explain why some information is missing from syllabi. Though we do not expect the facilities deficit to be solved any time soon, faculty facing such hindrances should use the CWP office and phone number as a default – this is assuming that we continue to have secretarial support.

Of greater concern are the scores for the categories of CRN, Prerequisites, Course/IF objectives, and attendance and grading policies. A factor in non-compliance is certainly the large number of adjunct faculty teaching for the CWP. Approximately 90 % of the CWP sections are staffed by adjunct faculty. Many adjunct faculty are hired last minute, and all work for the Buffalo State College Writing Program only as needed. The large percentage of adjuncts creates a transient faculty, one result of which may be a lack of commitment to programmatic goals and objectives. Many adjunct faculty work for multiple academic institutions in and outside of the area. For faculty teaching at multiple institutions, it may be easier to take a one-size-fits-all approach to course design. Even faculty wishing to be in compliance with our syllabi requirements may not have a sufficient level of awareness of our requirements.

- B. Of perhaps greater concern is the lack of desired characteristics, including stated student learning outcomes, evidenced in faculty syllabi. To a certain extent, we can assume that a number of faculty may, in fact, exhibit the desired characteristics in the classroom, without explicitly referencing these characteristics in their syllabi. However, we must also assume that the number of under-qualified, and in some cases, unqualified, faculty teaching for the College Writing Program certainly impacts upon course delivery and student learning. At present only the director of the program holds a doctorate in the field of Composition. Many more faculty, including all of the full-time faculty, hold graduate degrees (MA, ABD, Ph.D.) in related fields, and have completed course work in or related to composition studies. However, far too many

adjunct faculty have limited experience teaching in the field, and virtually no coursework or expertise in the subject area. **Though the CWP has and continues to provide faculty development opportunities for all faculty on campus, including our own adjunct faculty, it is unrealistic to expect expert course delivery from non-expert, under-qualified faculty members.**

ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **The CWP will continue to lobby for additional full-time lines in order to increase the number of well-qualified writing faculty.**
- **The CWP is in the process of creating a syllabi template that all CWP faculty will have to use. We expect this policy to go into effect in fall 2011.**
- **The CWP policy will be to ask faculty to use the CWP office address and phone number as a default.**
- **The CWP will continue to offer workshops designed to increase subject-area knowledge and pedagogical effectiveness.**
- **The CWP has taken additional action this past year in order to improve the quality of first-year writing instruction on campus. The student course evaluation questionnaire was revised to include questions about student learning outcomes, thus providing additional information regarding instructional objectives.**

2006 Syllabi Assessment:

Assessment criteria:

1. A link to department goals and policies, i.e. reference to the college website, and mention that students will be accountable for familiarity with it?
2. A clearly articulated attendance and late policy?
3. An explanation of individual instructor's evaluation scheme?
4. Contact information: office hours and BSC email address? (Linda Lambalzer will be the phone contact at ext. 5451 since adjuncts do not have voice mail.)
5. The nature of assignments, requirements, and major due dates with stated method of how instructor will notify students as semester develops of readings, assignments, homework, and so on?

Major findings:

- **Sixty-two % out of 21 CWP syllabi sampled were below standard on criteria 1.**
- **90 to 100 % out of 21 CWP syllabi sampled met the standards for criteria 2-5.**

CWP ASSESSMENT PLAN EVALUATION

College Writing Program 3 year Assessment Plan, 2009-2011

The College Writing Program is committed to ongoing programmatic self-assessment. From 2009-2011 the CWP programmatic assessment included a standard traits assessment in conjunction w/ the SUNY-

GER assessment (2009), a critical thinking assessment (2010) and faculty syllabi evaluation in comparison with departmental course objectives and designated student learning outcomes (2011).

2009 SUNY-GER assessment:

The rubric used to evaluate essays was changed for the 2009 programmatic self-assessment. SUNY and Buffalo State mandate that students must demonstrate competence in order to meet the Basic Communication requirement. Therefore the category of “approaches standards” was eliminated from the 2009 rubric in order to articulate assessment results in a manner that is more consistent with Buffalo State and SUNY standards. The second alteration to the rubric was to fold SUNY-GER SLO #3, students will research a topic, develop an argument and organize supporting details, into SLO # 1.

Assessment criteria:

SLO #1: Students will produce coherent text within common college-level written forms.

SLO #2: Students will demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts.

Major Findings:

- **77% of students sampled were at or above standard for SLO #1:** Students will produce coherent text within common college-level written forms.
- **60% of students sampled were at or above standard for SLO #2:** Students will demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts.

2006 SUNY-GER Assessment:

Assessment criteria:

SLO #1: Students will produce coherent text within common college-level written forms.

SLO #2: Students will demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts.

SLO #3. Students will research a topic, develop an argument and organize supporting details.

Major findings:

- **66.5% of students sampled met or exceeded standard for SLO #1:** Students will produce coherent text within common college-level written forms.
- **60.75% of students sampled met or exceeded standard for SLO #2:** Students will demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts.
- **64.25% of students sampled met or exceeded standard for SLO #3:** Students will research a topic, develop an argument and organize supporting details.

2010 Critical Thinking Assessment:

Assessment criteria:

SLO: Students will develop and demonstrate the use of critical thinking skills in their written texts.

Major Findings:

- **69% of CWP 101 samples met or exceeded the standard.**
- **77% of 102 samples met or exceeded the standard.**
- **101 scores are slightly lower than 102 scores overall.**
- **Second rater scores are slightly lower than first rater scores. This is likely explained by the fact that the second rater sample sizes were much smaller than the first.**

- Rater reliability is very good (.8-.9). This indicates that the first rater scores, which were based on the larger sample, are reliable.

Recommendations:

- The number of student samples demonstrating competence in producing coherent texts within common college-level written forms increased from 66.5% in 2006 to 77% in 2009 – a nearly 10% increase.
- The number of student samples demonstrating the ability to revise and improve such texts remains stable at approximately 60%, though one finding of the 2009 SUNY-Ger Assessment was that assessing student revision was difficult, and that we felt that the process being used did not produce accurate results. The CWP is currently working on developing a more accurate process of determining the ability of students to revise texts.
- In 2009 69% of 101 and 77% of 102 students were able to demonstrate competence in critical thinking skills. In 2006 64.25% of students sampled demonstrated competence in the ability to research a topic, develop an argument and organize supporting details.
- The addition of 5 (now 4 since one position that was left vacant has not been filled) full-time faculty in the College Writing Program, as well as ongoing faculty development for both adjuncts and full-time faculty, may well be having a positive impact upon student learning.
- The CWP 2011 programmatic self-assessment will be a pre and post test in the form of timed essays administered at the beginning and end of the term. The assessment will be designed to measure student improvement over the course of a semester. The ongoing programmatic self-assessment now taking place yearly could not be accomplished without full-time faculty, nor could the ongoing faculty workshops on teaching writing being offered to all Buffalo State faculty.
- The CWP needs to hire additional highly qualified full-time and/or tenure track faculty in order to continue to develop the College Writing Program and a culture of writing across the campus.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPONSE TO IF SURVEY RESULTS INVOLVING WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM AND WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT

A 2008 assessment of the Buffalo State Writing Across the Curriculum program was previously submitted to SIFOC. The 2008 assessment addresses the issue of WI course syllabi. (See Appendix A)

A survey assessing faculty attitudes regarding the efficacy of the Intellectual Foundations program was administered during spring of 2011. Several questions on the survey directly addressed issues involving both first-year writing instruction and writing across the curriculum, including:

- Are you currently or have you ever taught a course designated as writing intensive? (7, 8)
- What do you think the credit hours should be for Basic Writing? (15)
- Are there areas that you feel need more courses? (16)
- Opinions about writing across the curriculum. (17)
- How often do you assign formal writing? (18, 19)
- How often do you assign informal writing? (21, 22)
- Suggestions for improvement of the IF program. (25)

Survey responses:

Are you currently or have you ever taught a course designated as writing intensive? **The two questions, 7 and 8, yielded widely divergent responses.**

For question 7, administered to those who in response to question 3 reported they had not taught an IF course, 36.43% responded yes and 63.57% responded no.

For question 8, administered to those who in response to question 3 reported that they had previously taught an IF course, 66.94% responded yes, while 33.06% responded no.

There were no comments required for questions 7 and 8.

What do you think the credit hours should be for Basic Writing?

64.35% responded that the Basic Writing requirement should be 6 credit hours

21.74% responded that the Basic Writing requirement should be 9 credit hours

11.74% responded that it should be 3 credit hours

2.17% responded that it should be 0 credit hours

Are there areas that you feel need more courses?

42.79% had no opinion

24.45% responded Writing Intensive

18.78% responded Basic Writing

Above were the three highest response rates, followed closely by Math and Quantitative Reasoning with 18.34%.

Comments: Out of 67 comments for question 16, 27 involved writing. The comments involving writing fell primarily into four categories: comments on the generally poor quality of student writing (9), the need for writing remediation (6), recommendations to infuse writing throughout the curriculum/majors (5), and other (5).

- Our students are not as effective writers nor communicators as they were even 5 years ago. They seem to be more narrow in outlook the last round upped the ante on civilizations and history, adding 3 courses to the social sciences field and dropped courses from the natural sciences. With Obama's push to get more folk in STEM, we should adjust our IF accordingly. They need to be able to write, to speak and to problem solve. WE NEED more engineers.
- Students are clearly under-prepared in these areas, esp. writing and reasoning.
- I see more and more students I would classify as illiterate, who need remedial skills to write at a college level.
- Many of our students are quite weak in their writing skills, including mechanics.
- Writing and speech is crucial.
- The more writing the better- its really the only way to improve.
- Writing is a definite weakness at BSC - I routinely get text language in papers and sentences that don't resemble English.
- I think that diversity and writing intensive courses should be covered by the courses in which they are taught: arts, humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. In other words, diversity and writing intensive goals, as well as reasoning and analysis, should permeate the regular classes that are taught and be built into the core courses and the major.
- I think that students need more skill development, especially in writing and mathematical reasoning. I do not, however, believe that this would necessarily mean more courses. It could, for example, mean that writing is suffused throughout the entire curriculum. Writing intensive courses gives the campus the sense that this is where writing will be taught (and thus that it is not my responsibility). Rather, I believe that teaching writing is everyone's responsibility.
- I'm not sure that we are providing students with strong enough math and language skills. I'm not sure that we need to increase the number of writing credits, but perhaps there should be a competence assessment because many of our upper level students lack adequate writing skills.
- Some of our students graduate from BSC with appalling writing. Even in W courses, they don't always get the feedback needed to improve their writing ability. I would especially like to see more writing in most majors....I guess I would cut English some slack.
- In general I am not happy with the writing skills of our students.
- Students are sorely lacking in basic grammar and writing skills.
- Language- yes, foreign language/opens doors to world/forms bridges between DIVERSE people/knowledge otherwise closed off /takes time/FL improves English/Communication crucial! Basic writing? Do need it sooner than college/Much more to say! Lit class too.
- As far as the writing goes many students just can not write at the college level.
- Students writing skills are poor. There are not sufficient W courses for appropriate decisions so that students take writing in an area of interest.
- Many students can not write logical, grammatic sentences nor coherent essays, nor locate the thesis of an article.
- We as a faculty should ensure that our students are well versed in the ability to communicate on a variety of levels. Being exposed to technology and society promotes future possibilities for humanity, oral communication allows for proper thought process to be verbalized to a wide audience, social sciences encourages the understanding of

global societies and the need for future success, basic understanding creates the foundation for critical thinking and writing intensive courses continues the critical thinking processes and develops strong skills in writing and expressing ideas.

- Student cannot write. They cannot spell and do not know basic rules of grammar. But more importantly, they cannot write a clear and organized college essay.
- Our students cannot write. Even in advanced classes, where they have gone through the curriculum, their writing skills are frighteningly sub-par. I think there needs to be an intensive move towards Writing Across the Curriculum, perhaps more than necessarily "Writing Intensive" courses per se (where in the vast majority of their classes, they would be expected to write a paper(10 or less in lower division classes, 10 or above in upper division courses) as opposed to designating a course W by virtue of the amount of writing students do in the class)
- Our students' writing skills of great concern.
- Writing is important. Many students are not "up to speed" in their writing abilities. Doesn't practice make perfect? Plus, I believe that someone who writes well will be better equipped in the job market.
- The world has changed and what was once needed before, is not what is needed today. Students are using text language on their papers and emails and do not know how to communicate in person. Technology is a huge part of our lives and it's important that students know the proper way to conduct themselves.
- I don't think that we need to require more courses in all of the areas I've selected, rather I think departments need to ensure that those skills are addressed in their programs. Writing should be done in all upper level courses, and oral communication should be done in a set of upper level courses.
- Students' writing is generally quite weak; 6 credits is insufficient to remediate.

Opinions about writing across the curriculum:

55.46% responded that writing should be required each year

44.98 responded that writing should be infused within the major

27.51 responded that the current curriculum is working

16.59% responded that they feel we should move to a portfolio system to assess writing

3.49% responded that writing should not be infused across the curriculum

Comments: Comments fell into a number of categories, including suggestions (8) (use of writing portfolios, providing more institutional support for students, infusing writing throughout the majors, expanding writing throughout the first two years, infusion in addition to required writing courses), concerns about WI requirement (6), confusion or lack of information (6), commentary on poor quality of student writing (6), support for writing across the curriculum (5), and concerns about portfolios (2).

- Definition of what you mean by "writing across the curriculum" and how it is used in BSC 101 would have been helpful here.
- By only requiring two writing intensives, students often expect to not see writing in other courses. Students also tend to take these courses later in college, but I'd love to see them work on writing both earlier in college (right after CWP) and throughout their coursework.

- Portfolios area part of writing. People need to track their growth and progress within and between classes, years and
- programs. If they write more, then will become better writers. They need a variety of opportunities in many venues to write. Write to: communicate, argue, narrate, journal, to tell a story, and more.
- Of course it should be infused. It isn't a "separate" skill. I'm not sure about the portfolio system, but I don't see this as an "instead of" issue
- WI designation should not be allowed for lower division classes.
- I am not exactly sure what a portfolio system is
- Students seem to come to college with below-average writing skills. I believe it is critical to develop these, both within the major and outside of it. Writing about different topics requires different skills, knowledge, and experience. Broader=better.
- Portfolios are fine when there are enough of resources, but with no teaching assistants, who would evaluate them?
- Let's face it: our undergraduates manage to graduate from BSC with wretched writing skills. We see this all the time in our graduate courses. It is a shame that students routinely graduate from BSC without being able to write a sentence in which verbs and subjects agree and to organize a paragraph.
- As a writing teacher, I see writing as both a basic and ongoing skill/practice. The difficulty of providing ongoing support should not stand in the way of doing it!
- I believe that writing should be infused across the curriculum and not simply within a major, but this does not mean that I support the current 'W' system.
- They should write MORE all the time and at every level.
- This is the closest to my opinion. Most of all I believe that students should be reasonably fluent and adept writers in order to qualify for college entry in the first place. One reason, for instance, that it is more difficult than might be to foster student success in foreign language, literature and civilization (and we are NOT merely a language department, which would be impossible since language is integrated in other areas), is that students do not have the basic understandings and fluencies on which we should expect to be able to build. That is, we must always lose time doing remedial work.
- Caveat: Clarify expectations of what it means to be writing intensive,
- I honestly don't know what the writing accross the curriculum policy is.
- Portfolios only for majors that emphasize writing
- Just adding more courses does not address the quality of those courses nor improves students' writing abilities. I require papers in all of my courses and teach a senior writing intensive course. Students' writing ability is weak. Current resources such as the writing center do not adequately meet their needs. Rather than just require it, we need to provide serious supports for the students. Otherwise we are just burdening students and not addressing the issue.
- Our students' writing skills are abysmal. These skills are not taught in school systems, and by the time the students reach us they have no understanding of composition or syntax. We need to teach rudimentary writing skills as a corrective measure against the utter failure of public education to prepare students for proper writing.
- we do the writing intensive within our department - it is not easy
- I would like to know more about the portfolio concept. I was shocked when I got to Buff State at how poorly students write and that they could get through a BA/BS having never written a formal paper with references.

- The quality of students writing has diminished over the years, especially with the introduction of e-mail and text messaging.
- Many of the student's correspondence with the departments and the college in general are inappropriate, and not on a professional level. When a student does not capitalize the first letter of their first and last names, uses abbreviations, icons, etc. there is a problem, and I believe that more writing, especially basic grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, parts of speech, etc. needs to be implemented. I am embarrassed that we can graduate students who cannot spell or write correctly. It is an embarrassment to the college when these students eventually get jobs and employers realize their degree is from Buffalo State College and the student cannot write a grammatically correct sentence.
- Our students definitely need to improve their writing skills. This includes not only the mechanics and grammar, but
 - developing an argument or explaining an example.
 - We are not doing enough here; students do NOT know how to write.
 - I don't really know enough to have an informed opinion.
 - I believe that writing should be infused in the major in addition to the two basic writing classes.
- The math IF course I coordinate and teach is MAT103. The topics we cover highly relate to other IF courses. (Art, Social Science, History) I have thought how nice it would be to team teach an Art/Math IF course.
- Writing is unfortunately taught by people who love to write, exactly those who should not be teaching writing. People who struggle with writing do not and cannot learn to write in the same way that those who are naturally motivated to write.
- I think students should start with the two CWP courses and then learn about writing in their majors.
- From my observations, a good majority of our students would benefit from more writing in their first two years so that as they progress through the major they are better able to articulate their ideas.
- I believe moving the requirement to major courses would be extremely wise. I think supporting use of a portfolio system within volunteer majors would also be wise.
- While there are no easy answers, we need to promote the writing skills of our students.
- I don't really think any of these are the answer. The closest I can say is infuse it IN ADDITION to require a few semesters of required writing coursework but not each semester and it should also be on an individualized basis. Not all need it. The BSC textbook is quite poor. The first chapter is filled with typos. The ideas in it seemed peculiar to me...such as the notion that a "hierarchical organization of ideas" was more or less random. I found it difficult to use the textbook.

How often do you assign formal writing?

Questions 18 and 19 yielded varied responses.

Question 18 solicited responses from those who had not taught a WI course.

29.61% reported using formal writing very often

29.61% reported using it often

11.18% reported using it sometimes

8.55% reported using it occasionally
3.95% reported not using it at all
17.11% responded that it was not applicable

Question 19 solicited responses from those who had previously taught a WI course.

61.04% responded that they used formal writing very often
24.68% reported using it often
9.09% reported using it sometimes
3.9% reported using it occasionally
1.3% responded that it was not applicable

Comments: Comments for questions 18 and 19 fell into a variety of categories, including quantity of writing assigned (10), reasons why they do include writing (5), general commentary on writing (5), types of assignments (4), reasons why they do not (2), and suggestions (1).

Question 18:

- I teach writing for the media.
- I always teach writing as the more systematized approach to critical thinking, as opposed to the more free flowing thought involved in brainstorming and less formalized class discussions. I also stress that good writing, as a part of good thinking, is by nature recursive (a process not a product).
- One significant research paper as course capstone
- Assigned in each class
- The writing expectations are greater in graduate courses than in undergraduate courses.
- I assign lab reports. I am supposed to be grading them partially on their writing, but I attach only a small amount of credit toward that.....
- The meaning of this question is unclear. What does "processed, revised" refer to?
- five times during the semester and on midterm and final
- I require one major writing assignment per year. The last couple of years, I asked the students to have their papers checked for grammar, spelling, sentence structure before they send it to me. The improvement in their assignments was amazingly positive. Peer review produced respectable products. I encouraged them to seek peer advice on their writing when they enter their careers.
- More often in the advanced courses in the major.
- If I were to teach anything other than my introduction course, I would.
- I teach only graduate courses. Average is 4 major writing assignments, 60-80 pages per student per semester.
- Writing is an integral part of all the courses I teach.
- Taskstream
- I have my students write papers, but not for every course, mainly grad students. I teach a couple undergrad courses and I know just from their emails, that their writing skills are lacking.
- The teaching of writing takes a long time to teach and it should start in elementary school. I know the teachers try, but it takes a lot of work to teach it as part of an English class when it could be a stand alone subject k-12.

- I know that most people in general do not like to write, and dread every moment of it. But I don't think that most people were ever taught how to write. There is an excellent book that I learned about in a workshop on "Teachers of Writing."

Question 19:

- Every class I teach has a significant writing component, with or without the WI designation.
- Every course, every semester, every year.
- In every class, even my large capacity ones; this and oral communication are so essential to success and the intellectual and moral development of our students.
- in the social sciences this should always be required!
- Individual writing assignments are the best way to get the students to apply what you are teaching as well as the way to know what each student is actually grasping. My colleagues and wife yell at me for giving too many writing assignments because the grading takes so long. But I honestly feel it is the best way to guide them. But I think the writing needs to be done within each curriculum and major, not with arbitrary courses that take away credits that can be used to individualize a student's overall course list.
- I teach 300 and 400 level courses and require a substantive writing assignment(s) in each of those courses, including the ones that are not writing intensive.
- even in my courses that are not W courses
- I assign writing in all 300+ courses, unless the class size is > 35. In 400-level courses I meet with the students during CEP week to discuss their papers.
- Very often but not in introductory classes.

How often do you assign informal writing?

Questions 21 and 22 yielded somewhat varied responses.

Question 21 solicited responses from those who had not taught a WI course.

30.26% responded that they used informal writing very often

21.05% responded that they used it often

13.82% responded that they used it occasionally

10.53% responded sometimes

7.24% responded that they did not use it at all

17.11% responded that it was not applicable

Question 22 solicited responses from those who had taught a WI course.

35.06% responded that they used informal writing very often

22.08% responded often

20.78% responded occasionally

11.69% responded using it sometimes

9.09% responded not using it at all

1.3% responded that it was not applicable

Comments: Comments fell into several categories, including quantity of writing assigned (4), reasons why they do not include writing (3), types of writing (3), general commentary on writing (3), and confusion (1)

Question 21:

- I teach larger classes... many students are seriously underprepared for writing assignment and their papers require a great deal of time for corrections and comments. I am taking a break from papers this year to rethink the assignments.
- What is the relevance of this question to IF?
- not often enough
- Again, it's not appropriate in the course I teach, but if I were to teach other courses, I would.
- Informal writing is required for every class.

Question 22:

- Our students keep a field experiences journal, they brainstorm, they take notes, they write papers, they produce a masters' project. they make graphs, they write plans to follow.
- Every class.
- There is some form of writing assignment associated with most every class period.
- Is occasionally misspelled occasionally in informal writing?!
- I now use this more and more in all classes I teach.
- Of course students must take notes very often, but I don't look at them. Almost every day I stress to them the importance of words. We write mathematical ideas in words and then "translate" those sentences to symbolic language. I want them to hear words in their heads when they see mathematical notation.
- Students should always be taking notes. I do not assign that specifically or review their notes. I sometimes assign short assignments in class.

Suggestions for improvement of the IF program -

Of those comments involving writing, the comments fell into the following categories: the need for more writing instruction (6), infusion of writing across the curriculum (4), establishing some sort of writing litmus test (3), improving CWP 101/102 (2), more instruction in basic skills (2), too many adjuncts (1), and underprepared transfer students (1).

- Too many IF courses are being taught by adjuncts and there is little quality control.
- Increased writing, diversity, oral communication and technology experiences infused within the curriculum. I would like to so ALL IF courses contain at least one of the above foci.
- When we created writing, diversity, and oral communication requirements as specialized areas, students got the impression that courses not so designated should not expect them to write, communicate orally, etc. in these. So instead of insisting that students get an integrated education, we actually segmented our curriculum. This is, of course, exactly the opposite of what we intended. And, by creating these specialized requirements, we are sending the message that in the course of our regular curriculum our students are not getting these things, i.e. that the faculty is inadequate. But, our problem is not that we don't like rigor, but rather that rigor is met with resistance and resentment. This then devolves into an academically downward spiral. The institution is increasingly governed by FTE. make no mistake, I support our mission of providing a good education for students, even though some may come less prepared than we would like. However, we need also to ensure that by the time they graduate they are on par with the more "selective" colleges. Then, we need to make that widely known. People believe that we will take just anyone and give them an easy ride. That cheapens our degree, our reputation and does a disservice to all of us. We just aren't very good at promoting ourselves as intellectually rigorous and IF has done nothing to

improve the public perception that we are weak. This problem is exacerbated by the widespread notion the higher education should be job training rather than liberal arts and despite the fact that we call ourselves a liberal arts school, we do little to sell liberal arts and the marketability of people with liberal arts degrees. We give lip service to IF which is supposed to give the students a liberal arts beginning. Instead students (and their parents) are allowed to continue to believe that they only have to get the liberal arts stuff out of the way in IF and then go on and get their real educations.

- You can't have too much writing in undergraduate courses. It is embarrassing to see the number of our graduates who have such poor writing skills.
- Rather than specifically designate courses such as BSC 101, I think it would be better to work with faculty on finding ways to improve writing, reasoning, analysis and such in all the courses related to core requirements and each major. I think that all faculty should have someone assigned who can grade their papers for spelling and grammar, allowing the faculty member to concentrate on the content. I find I often have to grade a paper twice: once for spelling & grammar; then again for the content. If I didn't have to do the spelling and grammar, I could give more writing assignments. Maybe have a place where students could mandatorily hand in a supposedly finished paper before they hand it in. The writing workshop in Ketchum Hall does some of this, but they couldn't handle grading everyone's papers. I'm talking about a place where students have to get a passing grade on the spelling and grammar BEFORE they hand it into the teacher. If they can't get a passing grade on the spelling and grammar (indeed, a B would be a passing grade; anything below a do over), then the faculty member would never see it and the student would get an F.
- Need higher standards in CWP 101 and 102. Perhaps fewer courses overall.
- I would like more of the courses to be required to be taken here at BSC as transfer students do not, in my experience, come prepared even when they have taken these courses at a community college. This is particularly true for writing skills.
- Students cannot write and need to be better prepared....they come to BSC with deficits already from years of inability There should be 4 semesters of writing offered by the English department and a writing test at the beginning of the students entry into BSC so that they can be assessed as to whether they need remedial courses.
- Teaching APA writing, higher levels of writing expectation, proper use of grammar, greater use of vocabulary
- I would love to see some way of judging writing competence in students prior to graduation.
- More effective writing education . . . critical thinking and analysis . . .
- I believe that students should have to complete not only basic writing, but more writing courses and some type of writing course teaching them APA, MLA, etc styles of writing.
- More emphasis on diversity and some way to educate the incoming freshman as to why the development of lifelong intellectual curiosity, inquiry and creative thinking are so important. Also, writing skills that do not emphasize rote answers should be a focus throughout our college! These are not developed in the lower grades.
- More math is needed and the quality of student writing needs to improve.
- IF is doing a strong job right now. If possible, it should increase the emphasis on writing in its courses. (But, of course, faculty whose main interest is in educating their students should already be requiring a substantial amount of writing in all their courses. The only reason for not doing so is that reading them is so much work.) IF should move to incorporate explicit critical thinking into all IF courses. If students are not learning to think critically about

- American history, the social sciences or whatever, then they are not actually learning American history, or the social sciences, or whatever.
- A greater emphasis on writing in all IF courses AND in the major would enhance students' skills for graduate study and the workplace.
 - IF needs to be reconceptualized. One aspect (the easier part) of IF requires a cross-section of courses that gives students a "flavor" for a liberal arts education. The second aspect tries to impart various skills associated with a liberal arts education-- critical thinking, writing, math and communication. These skills can't be imparted with a 3-credit course. These skills need to be infused throughout the curriculum.

Assessment Recommendations:

Clearly there is significant concern about the quality of student writing at this campus. Buffalo State's mission is one of access, which often means providing access to higher education for those students coming from non-academic or underprepared backgrounds. In order to better serve all campus stakeholders, we recommend the following:

- Writing should be infused throughout the majors. When students see courses designated as writing intensive, it leads them to believe that writing happens only in isolated circumstances. Since we all recognize that this is not the case, all majors must take responsibility for infusing significant writing throughout their courses. Faculty with expertise in composition studies and the teaching of writing should serve as resources for faculty in the majors as they work to include writing as a component of their courses. Based upon the survey sample, it appears that many faculty already include writing in their courses.
- The Basic Writing requirement should remain at 6 credits or be extended to 9 credits. Opportunities for students to exempt out of taking these courses should be limited. When students are allowed to opt out of writing courses, it communicates to students that writing courses, and indeed writing in general, are insignificant and to be gotten out of if possible. If we are to create a culture of writing on this campus, then we must demonstrate our commitment to this value. We can begin by emphasizing the importance of written communication by limiting exemptions and requiring virtually all students to take both CWP 101 and CWP 102, and also by raising the threshold of competence and requiring a larger number of students to take CWP 099.
- In order to support faculty in their efforts to include greater opportunities for students to write throughout the majors, and in order to provide students with the writing instruction that they clearly need, the campus must commit to hiring additional full-time faculty for the College Writing Program. One possibility would be to institute a three-tiered faculty structure within the program, to include tenure-track faculty to teach and work with faculty across the curriculum, full-time faculty to teach a 4 course load and provide extensive student support, and adjuncts to teach in specialized areas and accommodate fluctuations in student enrollment.
- The College Writing Program, including the Writing Help Center, should be housed in a centralized location on campus in order to provide greater student access, and, more importantly, to communicate to students the centrality of written communication within the academy.

- **The campus should designate resources to developing the Writing Help Center into a full service center providing a range of tutoring services with trained tutors, as well as serving as a resource for faculty as they work to infuse writing into their courses.**

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: THE SENATE INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATIONS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
FROM: THE SIFOC WRITING OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE, (SUSAN M. LEIST, CHAIR); ROSALYN LINDNER, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ASSESSMENT
SUBJECT: WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM FOR THE UPPER LEVEL WRITING REQUIREMENT
DATE: 4/17/2018

REPORT ON ASSESSMENT OF WRITING SAMPLES AND SYLLABI FROM UPPER DIVISION "W" COURSES
FROM ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

The IF Writing Oversight Committee, a subcommittee of SIFOC and the Senate Curriculum Committee, conducted an assessment of the Writing Across the Curriculum program for the upper level writing requirement on January 14, 2008. The Committee decided in fall 2007 that an assessment of the current program practice and products was a necessary step in the re-examination of the WAC program at Buffalo State.

The assessment questions and the answers provided for them by the results of this undertaking were

- Do Buffalo State graduates write competently? **Two thirds do, but 19% approach the standards without meeting them, and 14% fall far below our standards.**
- Does writing competency depend on where students take their basic writing courses? **No, there was basically no difference if students took CWP 101/102 or took writing courses at their previous school.**
- Do syllabi satisfy W requirement as stated in our policies? **One third does and over one third clearly does not, while the remainder of them satisfies requirements somewhat. The criteria in the attached rubric for "W" syllabi are taken directly from the current catalog text on policy guidelines for "W" courses. The syllabi that did not meet the standards cited in that text fell short of those standards in these ways:**
 1. A number of the inadequate syllabi, about 10 of them, did not mention writing at all. They should never have had a "W" designation.
 2. Many of the inadequate syllabi had no mention of informal writing-to-learn strategies. According to the catalog text as reflected in the rubric, "W" course syllabi should contain both informal writing-to-learn strategies as well as formal writing assignments that provide for revision of writing and instructor feedback.

3. Many of the inadequate syllabi contained no evidence of ongoing in-class or out-of-class student writing.
4. Many of the inadequate syllabi contained formal writing assignments but made no provision for instructor feedback or student revision.
5. Many of the inadequate syllabi made no mention of linking student outcomes with writing or a minimum standard for writing. (Many had no student outcomes whatsoever.)

Assessment Recommendations

The recommendations ensuing from the results of this upper level writing requirement assessment are as follows:

1. The existing policy and guidelines for the Writing Across the Curriculum program for the upper-level writing requirement should continue and be affirmed as part of Intellectual Foundations Program.
2. For the use of academic departments, the Writing Oversight Committee will add information and articulation to those guideline regarding the employment of departmental portfolios (containing samples of both revised, formal writing and informal writing-to-learn) as a means of fulfilling the requirement rather than using "W" courses. The Committee strongly advocates use of the portfolio option.
Members of the Committee will meet with all departments of the college during the 2008-2009 school year to discuss the optional use of portfolios to fulfill the "W" requirement, providing consultation for each department to create a customized set of requirements for a student writing portfolio reflecting the department's discipline.
3. The Writing Oversight Committee also strongly advocates faculty development training in use of the techniques of writing to learn. Faculty development institutes reflecting the GUIDELINES FOR WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM COURSES will be conducted by a variety of qualified leaders on a regular basis during summer and winter breaks. The Committee believes that all new faculty should attend such training (or demonstrate that they already have such training) before they can teach "W" courses.
4. The Committee will request new submissions of "W" courses to be done during fall 2009 for effect in fall 2010. Each department should offer either two permanent upper level "W" courses, in addition to electives sometimes taught as "W," OR departments should construct requirements for their program portfolio to go into effect in fall 2010. Documents requested for the submission would consist of a statement articulating the "W" characteristics of each course that is submitted for "W" status. The submission would be conducted in a timely manner to provide for the exigencies of scheduling needs.
5. The Writing Oversight Committee will request status as the Senate Curriculum Committee designate for approving "W" course syllabi.

6. The Writing Oversight Committee will conduct regular assessments of the “W” program, using comparable methodology, as do the IF Cognate Areas, but on a two-year cycle. This 2008 assessment will be the baseline for future assessments.