

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

WAC

Writing Across the Curriculum

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NCTE National Day on Writing Carnival

On Friday, October 20, 2017, IUP Writing Across the Curriculum and the Kathleen Jones White Writing Center hosted the National Day on Writing Carnival. The carnival took place in the first floor lobby of the Humanities and Social Sciences Building from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

The carnival was free to attend. There, students, faculty, and staff engaged with various campus organizations in writing-themed carnival activities.

Attendees were also able to partake in free popcorn, cotton candy, and peanuts, as well as win prizes by participating in the activities.

Throughout the carnival, Cirque du Papier artist Michael Roy performed. Attendees were able to hear him speak about the history of origami as he created works of art with paper printed with text.

In addition to Michael Roy's paper artistry, attendees were able to play a WAC themed carnival duck game, create mad libs with writing center tutors, enjoy an idiom freak show hosted by an English 101 course, and participate in many other writing themed carnival activities.

The carnival was held in honor of the National Day on writing, which was established in 2009 by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). The National Day on Writing celebrates composition in all forms—from stories, poems, and letters to text messages, videos, and audio recordings—and demonstrates how writing is a vital part of our everyday lives. Thousands of writers from across the country recognize the National Day on Writing with local events, including write-ins, talks by local authors, and poetry slam celebrations. This year marks the fifth celebration at IUP. ■

Teach. Write.
Teach Writing.

The Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program provides support for faculty university wide in implementing writing into their courses.

The program aims to create and sustain a community of writers at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

If you have questions about WAC, please contact Bryna Siegel Finer at brynasf@iup.edu.

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Faculty Teaching WAC
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Most students who decide to major in Biology do so to discover cures to disease, understand how animals and plants evolve, or conserve endangered species—*not* because they want to become professional writers. However, students quickly learn that an integral part of achieving success as a scientist requires professional writing skills.

Writing skills are essential for aspiring scientists to gain permanent employment and reach their career goals. Successful communication of research findings, such as through journal publications and agency reports, is nearly impossible without being trained to write. Scientists are also often required to secure funding through grant proposals—another task that requires strong writing skills.

Because the future success of Biology students is so strongly affiliated with writing, we jumped at the opportunity to integrate Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) into our courses. For the past year and a half, we have worked with WAC director, Bryna Siegel Finer, to develop a Department Writing Plan. Over the next six months, we are excited to begin the first phases of implementing our plan into the curriculum.

The Biology Department will take a two-pronged approach to expanding writing as a teaching tool. First, we have inventoried current practices in our courses with the goal of establishing additional ways for students to learn through writing activities and assignments. Second we seek to assess student skills in scientific writing by requiring students to build electronic writing portfolios. The online platform is intended to ease the assessment process for faculty and provide a way for students to showcase their work to potential employers.

We are optimistic the WAC program will improve our students’ writing skills and ultimately prepare them to excel as professional scientists. We look forward to gathering assessment data and adapting to our students’ needs, and we hope our successes and identification of challenges will provide a road map that is useful for other departments interested in WAC. ■

Is Your Department Teaching WAC?

The cornerstone of the WAC program at IUP is the Department Writing Plan. To develop a plan, the WAC Director meets regularly (typically once every 3-4 weeks) with one or two appointed liaisons from the department, and they exchange drafts over email as well throughout the academic year and summer. Currently, eighteen departments from three colleges on campus are working toward developing writing plans. Contact brynasf@iup.edu to learn how your department can get started!

Department	Status as of Spring 2018	Roll-out expected
Anthropology	Complete	Fall 2017
Art	Drafting	tbd
Biology	Finalizing	Spring 2018
English	Beginning Fall 2017	tbd
Food and Nutrition	Complete	Fall 2016
Foreign Languages	Drafting	tbd
Geography & Regional Planning	Drafting/ on hold	tbd
Geoscience	Drafting/ on hold	tbd
History	Finalizing	Fall 2018
Hospitality Management	Drafting	Spring 2018
Human Development, Fashion Merchandising, & Interior Design	Beginning Spring 2018	tbd
Journalism	Drafting	tbd
Mathematics	Drafting/ on hold	tbd
Philosophy	Finalizing	Fall 2018
Political Science	Drafting	tbd
Psychology	Beginning Spring 2018	tbd
Religious Studies	Drafting	tbd
Sociology	Finalizing	Fall 2018

Student Writing Award

The WAC Program and the Kathleen Jones White Writing Center are thrilled to offer a \$500 award to a student in any discipline who demonstrates excellence in any genre of writing. Students should have one writing center tutoring session before submitting their work. Students can submit their writing at <https://goo.gl/forms/BKCK3WiRyyhb4nVe2> by March 23, 2018. The award will be presented at the annual Gallery of Writing Celebration on April 5th (the award will be given in spring 2018). Please encourage your students to submit their writing from your classes!

Faculty Teaching of Writing Award

The Center for Teaching Excellence is offering a \$500 award to an instructor who demonstrates excellence in the teaching of writing in combination with teaching of course content through writing as a mode of learning. This award is intended to recognize the thoughtful use and balance of writing-to-learn activities, writing-to-communicate assignments, and a commitment to improving students’ communication skills. Faculty in all disciplines are eligible to apply. For more details, go to <https://www.iup.edu/teachingexcellence/awards-and-grants/faculty-recognition-awards/>

Faculty Workshops

WAC workshops are offered on topics such as writing-to-learn pedagogy, creating effective writing assignments, efficient grading strategies, preventing plagiarism, and what to do with grammar. In the last three years, 79 faculty members have attended at least one WAC workshop from departments such as Food and Nutrition, Math, Theater and Dance, Sociology, and Biology.

When asked if they would recommend WAC workshops to their colleagues, attendees indicate overwhelmingly that they would. For example, one attendee said, “Attending the workshops gave me a better perspective on how I should look at writing assignments to make them more useful to students and how to evaluate writing assignments to help students improve”.

The majority of attendees also indicate that they have been able to incorporate what they learned in the workshops in both the liberal studies and majors courses that they teach by changing the types of writing assignments they assign. These results are very promising and indicate the workshops are encouraging faculty to teach more writing or experiment with teaching writing in different ways.

Spring 2018 Scheduled Workshops

Introduction to Writing to Learn: Thursday, February 15, 12:30-1:20 p.m. in HSS 306

Strategies for Efficiently Grading Student Writing: Wednesday, March 28, 10:10-11:00 a.m. in HSS 306

Available Workshops On Demand

If you have a group of colleagues (graduate students and/or faculty) interested in a WAC workshop, contact Bryna Siegel Finer at brynasf@iup.edu to set up a personalized workshop at a time that works for you.

Creating Effective Writing Assignments

Help your students who struggle with writing assignments succeed by making simple changes to the design and language in your assignment sheets.

Getting More Bang for Your Buck: An Introduction to Writing to Learn

Implement quick, low-stakes writing into any classroom to help students improve their writing without increasing your workload.

Strategies for Efficiently Grading Student Writing: Faster Response that Benefits You and Your Students

Maximize your feedback with response strategies that improve student writing and save you time.

Teaching Students to Write-to-Learn

Give your students more practice with writing without taking up too much class time.

What’s Grammar Got to Do With it? Teaching Writing Without a Red Pen

Comment effectively on student writing and still respond productively without spending time editing and correcting grammar.

Essay Exams: Writing Prompts for Student Success

Use essay exams to help your students improve writing skills and increase learning.

Teaching and Grading Writing in Larger Classes

Develop strategies to implement writing activities even in your largest class.

WAC Featured on the Center for Teaching Excellence Podcast

WAC Director Bryna Siegel Finer, Food and Nutrition faculty member Jodie Seybold, and Composition & TESOL doctoral student Marie Webb sat down with Center for Teaching Excellence podcast host, Brandon Galm, to chat about WAC at IUP. The group discussed how WAC has been implemented in various departments on campus, specific activities to use in classes, and the innovative new Food and Nutrition GA Mentoring Lab, where students can get support for their FDNT courses, including help on their writing. Download or listen to the podcast through the CTE Faculty Café at <http://iblog.iup.edu/ctepodcastseries/>

Research Opportunities in WAC

The peer-reviewed journal, *Written Communication*, invites article submissions for a special issue on **writing and science**. Submissions from established and new scholars of writing studies are welcome. The special issue will tentatively be published as Volume 35, Issue 1, of the journal, in January 2019. The aim of this special issue is to gather together studies that represent new and emergent thinking about the writing and science, broadly understood. Possible topics may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Writing and laboratory science
- Note-making as a rhetorical activity
- Scientific writing as material-semiotic practice
- Visuals in scientific inquiry and argumentation
- Multimodal analysis of scientific texts
- Emerging and hybrid genres in STEM disciplines
- Writing and interdisciplinary collaboration in the sciences
- Scientific publishing in an age of digital media and open access
- Rhetorical accommodation of science and technology
- Circulation of scientific information in popular media
- Citizen science as social and rhetorical practice
- Rhetorical figures in scientific communication
- Historical and cultural studies of writing in science
- Intercultural and multilingual scientific communication

- The rhetorical construction of gender, race, and sexuality in scientific discourse (and discourse more generally that uses science as warrant for arguments related to these and other socially relevant topics)

A wide range of approaches and topical foci are welcome. Submissions are due by March 1, 2018. For more information, go to <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0741088317737905>

Double Helix, a peer-reviewed open-access journal, publishes work addressing linkages between critical thinking and writing, in and across the disciplines, and it is especially interested in pieces that explore and report on connections between pedagogical theory and classroom practice. For more information, go to <http://qudoublehelixjournal.org/index.php/dh/index>

Prompt is a biannual, refereed online journal that publishes academic writing assignments directed at both undergraduate and graduate students from all academic disciplines. Their mission is to disseminate a mode of intellectual work that is too rarely circulated in public venues. They publish excellent and innovative writing assignments in order to create both a resource and a site of engagement for faculty who incorporate writing in their teaching. For more information, go to <http://thepromptjournal.com/index.php/prompt/index>

Interested in WAC research but not sure where to start? Email brynasf@iup.edu for resources and assistance. ■

“Will They Remember Writing It?”

The Chronicle of Higher Education recently published an article titled “Will They Remember Writing It?” In this article, James Lang, a professor of English and director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at Assumption College, in Worcester, MA, applies the ideas presented by Michele Eodice, Anne Ellen Geller, and Neal Lerner in their book, *The Meaningful Writing Project*.

He begins by reflecting on his own experiences as a student writing papers in his college courses. He is surprised to discover that not only does he not remember many of the papers, but he has no recollection of entire courses he took as a student. This leads him to think about *The Meaningful Writing Project*. In this book, the authors present an analysis of the results of a survey meant to discover what constitutes a meaningful writing assignment.

This survey was given to more than 700 undergraduates at three different institutions. The students were asked to answer two questions: (1) “Describe a writing project from your undergraduate education that was meaningful to you” and (2) “Explain why it was meaningful”. In addition to the responses gathered through this survey, the authors supplemented their data with interviews with a subset of the survey respondents and faculty members who had been found to have created meaningful writing assignments.

The authors discovered that there are three components which make writing assignments meaningful: agency, engagement, and transfer potential. Assignments that have agency provide students a say in the topic or form of their writing. Engagement occurs when students are actively involved with their writing through feedback, peer-review, and research. Transfer potential occurs in one of two ways: (1) students “transfer in” their prior knowledge or experiences, or (2) students “transfer out” the skills they learn through the assignment to future assignments and activities.

While the authors of *The Meaningful Writing Project* do identify qualities of meaningful writing assignments, they do not provide a recipe for the perfect assignment. As instructors are creating their writing assignments, they should attempt to expand their assignments in one of the three directions identified by the book. Different assignments will lend themselves to each of the qualities.

Lang ends his analysis by providing a real world example of how he was able to use these ideas in order to create a meaningful writing assignment in his own classroom by giving his students agency in both topic and form. ■

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